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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION ONE OF TWO SAIGON 180

SUBJECT: BIO, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES: NGUYEN HOA HIEP-NGUYEN THE TRUYEN

REF: SAIGON 76, SAIGON 154

1. HIEP, WHOSE REAL NAME IS NGUYEN VAN HIEP, IS AN ELDERLY SOUTHERN POLITICIAN AND FORMER INTERIOR MINISTER WHO IS CURRENTLY LEASDER OF THE SOUTHERN BRANCH OF THE VIETNAM NATIONALIST PARTY OR VNQDD. NGUYEN THE TRUYEN IS AN ELDERLY NORTHERN POLITICIAN WHO RAN FOR THE VICE-PRESIDENCY IN 1961 WITH NO NHUT TAN.

2. HIEP WAS BORN IN 1905 IN BINH DUONG PROVINCE, JUST NORTH OF SAIGON, OF A MIDDLE-CLASS BUDDHIST FAMILY. HE STUDIED FOR A TIME AT CHASSELOUP-LAUBAT LYCEE IN SAIGON AND QUIT SCHOOL IN 1922 TO WORK IN THE POST, TELEPHONE, AND TELEGRAPH OFFICE IN SAIGON. IN 1925 HE LOST HIS JOB AFTER A STRIKE OF POSTAL EMPLOYEES, FLED TO THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, AND CONDUCTED POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AMONG THE HIGHLANDERS IN THE AREA FROM PHAN RANG TO NHA TRANG. IN 1927 HE WAS ARRESTED BY THE FRENCH FOR LEADING A PROTEST AGAINST THE PROHIBITION ON BURNING THE FORESTS FOR RICE CULTIVATION, AND IMPRISONED BRIEFLY. HE JOINED THE VNQDD IN OCOTOBER 1927, THE YEAR OF ITS FOUNDING.

3. IN 1928 THE VNQDD SENT HIEP TO WHAMPOA MILITARY ACADEMY FOR TRAINING. ON RETURNING TO HIS HOMELAND IN 1930 HE WAS AREESTED IN HAIPHONG AND TRANSFERRED TO THE CENTRAL PRISON IN SAIGON, WHERE HE WAS KEPT TOGETHER WITH COMMUNIST LEADER PHAN VAN DONG (NOW PREMIER OF NORTH VIET-NAM) AND OTHER COMMUNIST LEADERS. HE WAS TRIED IN JULY 1930 AND SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS FOR PLOTTING AGAINST THE PROTECTORATE GOVERNEMENT.

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AND EXILED TO HA TIEN PROVINCE. AFTER HIS RELEASE HE RETURNED TO CHINA AND CONTINUED HIS MILITARY TRAINING, WORKED FOR THE VNQDD UNDER LEADER NGUYEN HAI THAN, AND SERVED IN THE CHINESE KUOMINTANG GUERILLAS IN THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR.

4. IN 1939 HIEP RETURNED TO COCHINCHINA BUT FOUND THAT MANY OF HIS COMRADES HAD BEEN ARRESTED. HE WENT TO HAIPHONG BUT WAS NEVERTHELESS ARRESTED FOR THE THIRD TIME BY THE FRENCH. HE WAS RELEASED SOMETIME DURING THE WAR AND WORKED ON CONSOLIDATING THE VNQDD ORGANIZATION IN THE SOUTH. IN 1944 HE BEGAN COOPERATING WITH THE JAPANESE AGAINST THE FRENCH AND ASSISTED THEM IN THE JAPANESE COUP OF MARCH 1945, THEREAFTER FORMING A VNQDD JAPANESE DEFENSE GROUP WHICH, AFTER THE END OF WORLD WAR II, BECAME THE BASIS OF THE THIRD DIVISION OF THE PEOPLE'S RESISTANCE FORCES WHICH TRIED TO STOP THE FRENCH RE-OCCUPATION, FIGHTING AS GUERILLAS MAINLY IN THE PLAIN OF REEDS.

5. WHEN THE FRENCH AND VIET MINH (INCLUDING VNQDD LEADER NGUYEN HOAN KHANH, NOW A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE) SIGNED AN AGREEMENT IN MARCH 1946 THE THIRD DIVISION WAS CAUGHT IN THE SQUEEZE AND FORCED TO DISBAND, AND HIEP RETURNED TO SAIGON. IN 1947 HE WAS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CAO DAI AT TAY NINH; IN 1952 HE WAS DESCRIBED AS A SUPPORTER OF HIS PRESENT RUNNING MATE NGUYEN THE TRUYEN. HE WAS REPORTEDLY THE SAIGON REPRESENTATIVE OF DISSIDENT CAO DAI GENERAL TRINH MINH THE, WHO LATER RALLIED TO THE GOVERNMENT. HE CLAIMS TO HAVE RECEIVED IN 1956 A LETTER FROM CAO DAI POPE PHAM CONG TAC INVITING HIM TO BECOME CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE UNIFIED CAO DAI ARMY.

6. DURING THE DIEM REGIME HIEP REMAINED RELATIVELY INACTIVE POLITICALLY. IN 1964 HE WAS ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF THE SOUTHERN FACTION (ONE OF SIX) OF THE VNQDD, AND IN DECEMBER OF 1964 HE PROPOSED THAT HIS PARTY BE GIVEN AN INDEPENDENT ROLE IN THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR AGAINST THE VIET CONG IN THE PLAIN OF REEDS AND OTHER AREAS.

7. IN FEBRUARY 1965 HIEP WAS NAMED MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR BY PREMIER PHAN HUY QUAT. HE DID CONSIDERABLE WORK IN PREPARING FOR THE SUCCESSFUL PROVINCIAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS OF MAY 30, BUT QUAT BECAME DISSATISFIED WITH HIS PERFORMANCE AND SOUGHT TO REPLACE HIM WITH TRAN VAN THOAN (NOW A VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE). HIEP REFUSED TO RESIGN, AND THE THEN CHIEF OF STATE PHAN KHAC SUU REFUSED TO BACK QUAT, BRINGING ON THE CRISIS WHICH LED TO THE RESUMPTION OF POWER BY THE MILITARY IN JUNE 1965.

8. IN 1966 HIEP APPARENTLY HAD A ROLE IN THE ORGANIZATION OF

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THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY FORCE WHICH WAS DESIGNED TO UNITE THE VNQDD AND WHICH OPPOSED THE STRUGGLE MOVEMENT IN I CORPS. THIS ORGANIZATION LATER WON A SEAT IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY FROM QUANG TRI. NIEP HAS CONTINUED EFFORTS TO UNIFY THE VNQDD.

9. TRUYEN WAS BORN IN 1898 IN NAM DINH, NORTHERN VIET-NAM; HIS FATHER WAS AN OFFICIAL. WHILE STUDYING CHEMICAL ENGINEERING IN FRANCE HE WAS IN CONTACT WITH HO CHI MINH AND VIETNAMESE NATIONALISTS. HE COLLABORATED WITH HO IN THE PUBLICATION OF LE PARIAH IN 1926 AND WAS A FOUNDER OF THE ANNAMITE INDEPENDENCE PARTY, A MEMBER GROUP OF THE COLONIAL COMMISSION OF THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY. HE WENT TO MOSCOW DURING THE 1920S, BUT IN 1927 HE QUIT THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THEREAFTER IDENTIFIED HIMSELF WITH TROTSKYITE, NATIONALIST AND SOCIALIST MOVEMENTS.

10. ON RETURNING TO INDOCHINA IN 1936 TRUYEN BECAME PRO-JAPANESE, FOR WHICH HE WAS ARRESTED IN 1941 AND DEPROTED TO MADAGNSCAR. THERE HE MET AND BECAME FRIENDS WITH PHAN CONG TAC, THE FORMER CAO DAI POPE. RETURNING TO INDOCHINA IN 1946, HE DECLINED AN OFFER TO WORK WITH HO CHI MINH. IN 1950 HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE "THIRD FORCE" NATIONALIST POLITICAL GROUP, AND IN 1952 HE WAS IN THE NATIONAL EDIFICATION GROUP WHICH WAS FORMED OF INTELLECTUALS PLANNING AN ORGANIZATION OF CADRE TO REPLACE THE GOVERNMENT OF VIET-NAM. HE WAS THE PUBLISHER OF NHAN DAN, A NEWSPAPER WHICH APPEARED BRIEFLY IN HANOI BEFORE IT WAS SUPPRESSED BY THE FRENCH. IN 1953 HE WAS ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF THE LEAGUE OF DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN VIET-NAM. HE WAS ALSO AN ACKNOWLEDGED LEADER OF THE UNITY GROUP OF ANTI-FRENCH, ANTI-BAO DAI AND ANTI-VIET MINH NATIONALISTS WHICH WON THE 1953 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN HANOI.
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11. TRUYEN OPPOSED THE DIEM REGIME FROM THE BEGINNING. IN 1956 HE WAS A SIGNER OF A "LETTER FROM THE ELDERS" TO DIEM, ATTACKING THE CULT OF PERSONALITY AND OTHER SHORTCOMINGS OF THE REGIME. IN 1958 HE WAS PROPOSED BY A GROUP IF INTELLECTUALS AS PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL IN A GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO REPLACE DIEM'S. IN 1960 HE BELONGED TO THE "SPIRIT" GROUP OF OPPOSITIONIST INTELLECTUALS AND REPORTEDLY BACKED THE CARAVELLE PETITION CALLING FOR DEMOCRATIC REFORMS, ALTHOUGH HIS NAME WAS NOT AMONG THE SIGNERS. IN 1961 HE RAN AS VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE WITH HO NHUT TAN AGAINST DIEM AND NGUYEN NGOC THO; THE SLATE FINISHED SECOND GOT 6 PERCENT OF THE VOTE.

IN FEBRUARY 1962 TRUYEN WAS REPORTEDLY ARRESTED AND QUESTIONED FOR NEUTRALIST AND OPPOSITIONIST ACTIVITIES. LTTLE HAS BEEN HEARD OF TRUYEN'S POLITICAL ACTIVITIES SINCE THEN.
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